



## News Release

**For Immediate Release:**  
Wednesday, September 29, 2004  
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### **Utah Department of Health Urges Parents to Be Good Role Models at Home, at School and While Eating Out**

*Lead the Way with 5 A Day*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH), in partnership with the 5 A Day Association of Utah, is urging parents to “Lead the Way: Choose Fruits, Vegetables, and Physical Activity” beginning today! Only one in five Utahns eats 5 to 9 servings a day, slightly below the national average. Studies show that parents who encourage their children to eat fruits and vegetables actually eat more fruits/vegetables themselves (4.1 servings vs. 2.7 per day).

Parents can help reverse the skyrocketing trends in childhood obesity, high blood pressure, and type II diabetes by “leading the way” at home, at their children’s schools and when eating out. To help parents get started, Utah is providing new information and health tools, including a set of checklists to assess the home and school, as well as action steps to make sure fruits and vegetables are always available. These checklists are available on the UDOH’s [www.hearthighway.org](http://www.hearthighway.org).

“It’s vital for parents, as the most influential role model in children’s lives, to lead by example,” said Rachel Cox, R.D., C.D., UDOH. “Too many of our children are fighting diet-related illnesses. Parents need to lead the way and help children to develop healthy eating and physical activity habits that will stick with them throughout life,” Cox added.

Obesity rates have doubled in children and tripled in adolescents over the last 20 years. Today, one in seven young people are obese and one in three are overweight. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), poor diet and physical inactivity are among the leading causes of preventable death in the United States. Healthy lifestyles — staying active and eating a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables — can help reverse this trend.

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At home, parents should:

- Involve kids in the grocery shopping, from putting their fruit and vegetable favorites on the list to bagging their choices in your grocery store's produce section.
- Keep a fresh fruit bowl on the table or counter, and keep easy-to-grab-and-eat vegetables in the refrigerator.
- Serve two vegetables with dinner.

The majority of children eat lunch made at school. Parents have the power to make sure there are plenty of appealing fruit and vegetable choices offered at schools, in cafeterias, in the classroom, and in vending machines and school stores. Recent programs in schools show that when fruits and vegetables are added to the food choices throughout the day — including salad bars at lunch and snacks in the classroom — children and teens eat them and get closer to eating the amount of fruits and vegetables needed for good health.

At school, parents should:

- Visit the school at lunchtime to find out what the school lunch program offers as well as what's available in vending machines, school stores, and as part of fundraisers.
- Make children's healthy food choices known to their teachers and principal, or help children write a letter to your local school board.
- Bring fresh fruit treats for birthday and other parties at school – What kid wouldn't love a big slice of watermelon for someone's birthday, or a cup of fresh, juicy berries?

For more information about healthy eating, recipes, tips or National 5 A Day Month visit [www.hearhighway.org](http://www.hearhighway.org) or the National Cancer Institute's 5 A Day Web site at [www.5aday.gov](http://www.5aday.gov)

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death; assuring access to affordable, quality health care; and promoting healthy lifestyles.*